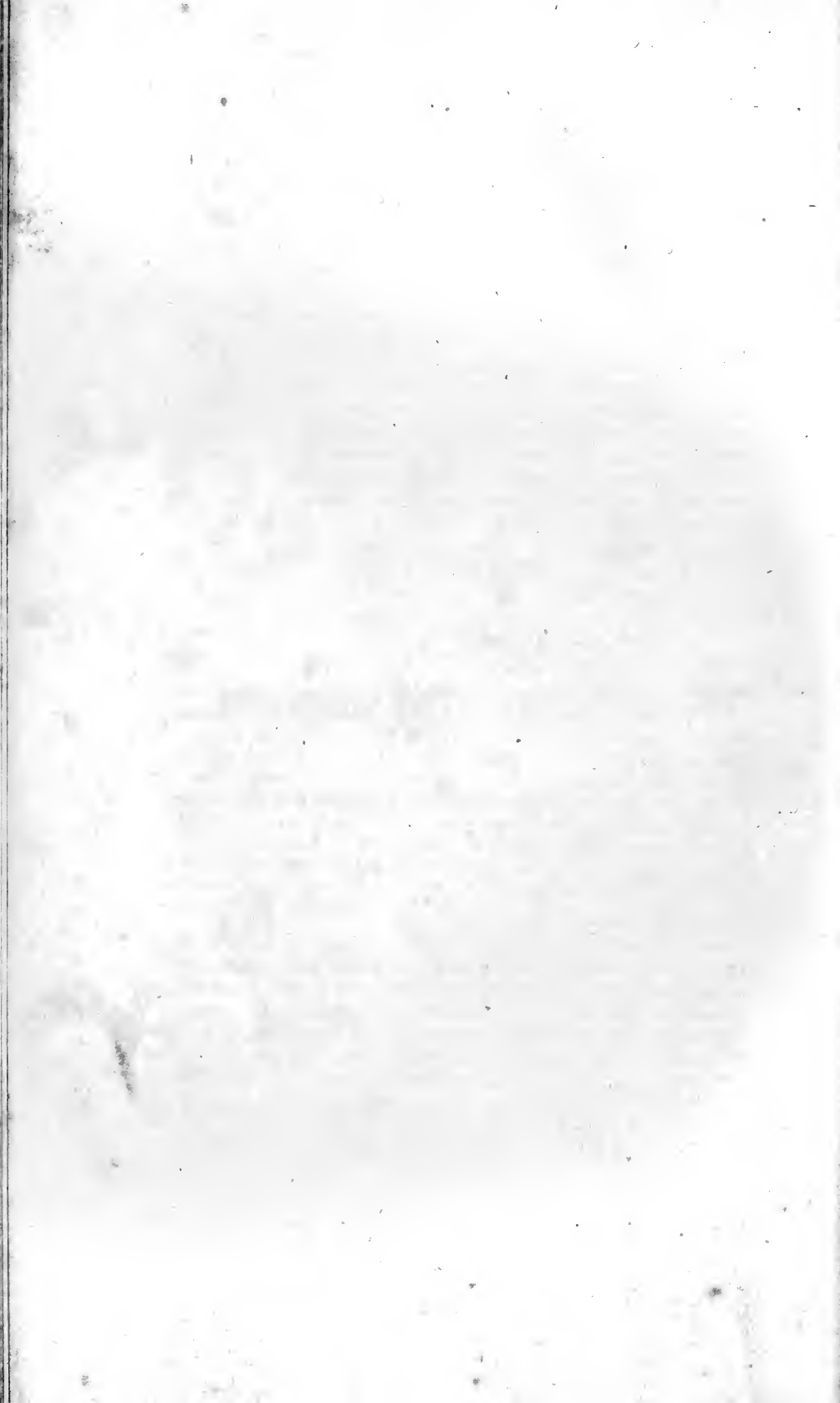


THE
CARNALITY
OF
Religious Contention,
IN TWO SERMONS,
PREACHED
At the Merchant's Lecture,
IN BROAD STREET.



THE
P R E F A C E

TO
THE READERS.

THIS title no body can think is meant to condemn all contention about matters of religion as carnal; but since there is too much which is apparently so, it only signifies it to be the design of the following discourse to shew what contention that is, and when, or in what case, though it hath religion for its object, it may not have it for its principle, but that very frequently, the lust of the flesh hides itself under that specious name. And to shew wherein, while it affects to hide, yet unawares it discovers itself in the management of affairs of that sacred kind. Thus it often really is; and then is that noble cause as ignobly served, as when (according to that father's observation) a man proves to be unfaithful even for the faith, and sacrilegious for religion. *Cypr. de Simpliciter. Præl.*

When in one place (*Jude 3.*) christians are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith; and in another, (*2 Tim. 2. 24.*) we are told the servant of the Lord must not strive; it is plain there is a contention for religion, which is a duty, and there is a contention, even concerning religion too, which is a sin. And that sin the apostle, in this context, out of which our discourse arises, doth deservedly expose by the name of flesh, and of the lust, or of the works thereof; such as wrath, variance, envy, hatred, &c. Whence it is easy to collect in what sense it is said in the mentioned place, the servant of the Lord must not strive, namely, as that striving excludes the gentleness, the aptness to instruct, and the patience, which are in the same place

enjoined, where that striving is forbidden. And from thence it is equally easy to collect too, in what sense we ought to contend for the faith earnestly, that is, with all that earnestness which will consist with these, not with such as excludes them : as earnestly as you will, but with a sedate mind, full of charity, candour, kindness and benignity towards them we strive with. We ought, we see (in the mentioned place) to be patient towards all men. Towards fellow-christians there should certainly be a more peculiar brotherly kindness.

The difference is very great, and most discernable in the effects between the churchs' contentions against enemies without it, and contentions within itself. The former unite it the more, increase its strength and vigour. The latter divide and enfeeble it. As to those of this latter kind, nothing is more evident, or deserves to be more considered, than that as the Christian church hath grown more carnal, it hath grown more contentious, and as more contentious, still more and more carnal. The savour hath been lost of the great things of the gospel, which have less matter in them of dispute or doubt, but which only did afford proper nutriment to the life of godliness, and it hath diverted to lesser things, (or invented such as were, otherwise, none at all) about which the contentious, disputative genius might employ, and wherewith it might entertain, feed, and satiate itself.

Thereby it hath grown strong and vigorous, and acquired the power to transform the church from a spiritual society, enlivened, acted, and governed by the Spirit of Christ, into a mere carnal thing, like the rest of the world. Carnality hath become, and long been in it a governing principle, and hath torn it into God knows how many fragments and parties ; each of which will now be the church, inclose itself within its own peculiar limits, exclusive of all the rest, claim and appropriate to itself the rights and privileges which belong to the Christian church in common, yea, and even Christ himself, as if he were to be so inclosed or confined : and hence is it said, *Lo here is Christ, or there he is*, till he is scarce to be found any where ; but as, through merciful indulgence, overlooking our sinful follies, he is pleased to afford some tokens of his presence both here and there. Yet also how manifest are the tokens of his displeasure and retirement ! And how few will apprehend and consider the true cause ! I will now adventure to offer these things to serious consideration.

1. Whether for any party of christians to make unto itself other limits of communion than Christ hath made, and hedge up itself within those limits, excluding those whom Christ would admit, and admitting those whom he would exclude, be not in itself a real sin ? When I say *make to itself* this more peculiarly concerns those who form their own communions, having nothing herein imposed upon them by civil authority. Let others censure themselves as they see cause. They have a holy table among them, the symbol of their communion with one another in the Lord. I would ask, "Whose is this table ? Is it the table of this or that man ? or party of men ? or is it the Lord's table ?"

Then certainly it ought to be free to his guests, and appropriate to them. And who should dare to invite others, or forbid these ?

2. If it be a sin, is it not a heinous one? This will best be understood by considering what his limits are. Nothing seems plainer than that it was his mind, Christianity itself should measure the communion of christians, as such : visible Christianity their visible communion. It will here then be inquired, (as in all reason it should) what Christianity is. And if it be, every one will understand the inquiry concerning that, as they would concerning any thing else, what is its essence ? Or what are its essentials, or wherein doth it consist ? Not what are all the several accidents it may admit of ? as you would do, if it were inquired, What is humanity ? Now here it will be readily acknowledged that Christianity (as all things else that are of moral consideration) must be estimated more principally by its end, and that its final reference is not to this world, but to the world to come, and to a happy state there. And that, considering the miserable state wherein it finds the souls of men here, and the greater misery they are hereafter liable to, it must design their present recovery, and finally, their eternal salvation.

That in order hereto it must propound to men some things necessary to be believed, some things necessary to be done. And that both must intend the making of them good in order to the making them happy, or the saving of them from eternal misery. That both are sufficiently propounded by the kind and great Author of this constitution Christ himself, in his word or gospel. That this gospel, besides many incidental things, expressly represents some things as of absolute necessity to salvation, by which are settled the very terms of life and death, unto sinners, and as a principal, most comprehensive, and most fundamental thing to all the rest, requires men's resigning and subjecting themselves unto him ; or putting themselves by solemn covenant into his hands, or under his conduct, to be by him brought to God, and made finally happy in him.

Whatsoever therefore is of absolute necessity to this end is essential to Christianity. Christians then are a sort of men tending to God and blessedness under the conduct of Christ, to whom they have by covenant devoted themselves, and to God in him. Visible Christians are such as are in this visible tendency, with their children, yet in minority, and not capable of making an understanding profession themselves. Such as have arrived to that capacity are no longer to be considered in their parents, but a part by themselves. They that have been sufficiently instructed in the principles of the Christian religion, that have devoted themselves to God in Christ, and live in their general course conformably to his holy rules, are visibly personal covenanters. It is plainly the mind of Christ, that those be received into that plenary communion which belongs to the Christian state ; and particularly, unto that sacred rite which is the communion of his body and blood, and wherein the new testament or covenant hath its solemn obligation, and wherein as *fæderati*, or *persons in covenant*, they have more express communion with him, and one another.

They that are yet unacquainted with the most necessary things of Christian religion, are to be held as catechumens under instruction, if they be willing. They that live licentiously in the state of penitents, till they give that proof of their serious repentance, as that their profession thereof appear not to be slight and ludicrous. They that refuse to learn, or be reformed; that live in open hostility against the known laws of Christ, are not visible christians, are not visibly in the way of salvation. Visible subjection and visible rebellion are inconsistencies. If therefore any society of men, professedly christian, do make other limits of their communion; admitting those that Christ's rule excludes, excluding them whom it would admit; especially, if the alteration be, not only by the making those things necessary which he hath not revealed nor enjoined as necessary, but which he hath not revealed or enjoined at all; and so is not only to add to Christian religion taken at large, but even to its essentials; this is substantially to change the evangelical covenant, to make it another thing, to break Christ's constitution, and set up another. If they be little things only that we add, we must know there is *nihil minimum*, *nothing little* in religion. What, if as little as they are, many think them sinful, and are thereby thrown off from our communion! The less they are, the greater the sin to make them necessary, to hang so great things upon them, break the church's peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new gospel, new terms of life and death, a new way to heaven. And is as much as in us lies, to make things of highest necessity depend not only upon things of no necessity, but that are, in our religion, perfect nullities, not having any place there at all. And thereupon is, in effect to say, If you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be christians, you shall have no christian ordinances, no christian worship; we will as far as in us is, exclude you heaven itself, and all means of salvation. And upon the same ground upon which they may be excluded one communion by such arbitrary, devised measures, they may be excluded another also, and be received no where. And if their measures differ, they all exclude one another; and hence, so many churches, so many christendoms. If this be sinful, it is a sin of the deepest die. Whereas the Holy Scriptures speak with such severity as we know they do, of the altering of man's landmarks, what may we think of altering God's! And the sin is still the greater, if the things of highest necessity are overlooked in the mean time as trifles, tything of mint is stood upon, but judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God passed over, (as Mat. 23. 23. Luke 11. 42.) infidels poured in upon the church! wolves and bears under the name of sheep, and the lambs of Christ, (which he requires to be fed) thrown out into the wilderness!

3. But if we suppose it a sin, and so heinous a one, how far doth the guilt of it spread! How few among the several sorts and parties of christians are innocent, if the measures of their several communions were brought under just and severe examination! How few that lay their communions open to visible christians as such, excluding none of whatsoever denomination, nor receiving any that by Christian rational estimate cannot be judged such.

4. How few that consider this as the provoking cause of Christ's being so much a stranger to the Christian church ! And how little is it to be hoped we shall ever see good days till this wasting evil be redressed ! Or that our glorious Redeemer, who is head of all things to the church, should ever own it by visible favours, should protect, cherish, enlarge it, or make it spread in the world, (and how little it is naturally in any probability of doing so) or that he should treat it as his, while it is so little itself, and so little one. In the present (most deplorable) state of things, private, (that is carnal) interest is the thing every where designed, by one party, and another. And by wishing the prosperity of the church, or endeavouring it, is only meant seeking the prosperity of our own party. So that there can be no united prayers, nor joint endeavours for any truly common good ; but what seems desirable to some, is dreaded and deprecated by all the rest. Thus for thirteen or fourteen hundred years hath the church been gradually growing a multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing ; broken and parceled into no body knows how many several sorts of communions. The measures whereof how strangely alien have they been from those which were genuine and primitive, that is, from substantial Christianity, and the things that must concur to make up that. Instead of sound knowledge of the few, clear, and great things of religion, a great many doubtful opinions ; the taking one side in a disputed point ; the determination of a logical question, understanding, or saying one understands (whether we do or no) a metaphysical nicety ; and sometimes professing to believe somewhat that Scripture never said, or shews itself never to have meant, and that is most manifestly contrary to all reason and common sense. Instead of reverent, decent, grave worship ; affected, scenical, ludicrous formalities, uncouth gesticulations, disguised countenances, with I know not what empty shews of a forced and feigned devotion ; which things also were to serve instead of orderly, unreprouvable conversation, of serving God, and of doing good to other men ; and to expiate the crimes of a very bad one, to make amends, and atone for the lewdest, the most licentious, and most mischievous practices.

In sum ; not only are things most alien from real Christianity added to it, but substituted in the room of it, and preferred before it. Yea, and things most destructive of it, indulged and magnified in opposition to it. This is too generally the state of the carnalized Christian church. And never were there more fervent contentions among all sorts, whose notions, opinions, modes, and forms are to be preferred.

The word of God tells us that to be carnally minded is death. These contests seem therefore to express great solicitude how most neatly to adorn a carcass, or at best how with greatest art and curiosity to trim, and apparel gorgeously, a languishing man, in the feared approaches of death, instead of endeavouring to save his life. But if any endeavour to that purpose were yet to be used ; what

it should be; that any man should go about to propose to the Christian church, were both presumptuous, and hopeless. We can only speak our wishes to men, and offer them in solemn supplications to God. And it were a happy omen, if good men could once agree what, in particular, to pray for; it being out of question that such men, would not be guilty of so much hypocrisy, as to their uttermost, not seriously to endeavour, what they durst adventure, and thought it necessary to make the subject of their prayers. And one would think it should not be difficult to men of sincere minds, upon serious consideration of the present sad state of things, not only in general to pray for the true spiritual welfare of the church of Christ in the world; but so far to be particular, as to pray in order thereto, that it may be more entirely one. We are told, There is one body, and one Spirit. Eph. 4. 4. That the Spirit, is but one, we are sure is true in fact: and so we are that the body animated by that Spirit, as it is such, can be but one also. But the apostle's business in that place, is not merely to assert such a union, as there already was, but also to persuade to such a one as there yet was not; that is, that it might be more entire and complete than, hitherto it was; and that such a unity might be preserved in the bond of peace: and this in order to its growth to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ: implying plainly enough that the less it was one, the less it would grow. Which also is sufficiently evident in itself. For it is first plain in the nature of the thing, that by how much it is more divided and multiform, it will appear the less considerable in the world, and so be less apt to attract, and draw in others. Yea, and its appearance and aspect will not only be less inviting and attractive; but it will be offensive, and create prejudices in the minds of men against Christianity itself. Which appears the plain meaning of that petition of our blessed Lord, when he was leaving the world, John 17. 21. That they all might be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Implying manifestly, that if they did not appear one, it would strongly tempt the world to infidelity. Whereupon all good men have a mighty inducement to unite in this request; for more entire visible oneness in the Christian church, not only from the example of our Lord leading them in this request, but from the reason also by which he enforces it, that otherwise the rest of the world must be confirmed and obdured in their infidelity. Who sees not therefore that the Christian interest is naturally obstructed in its extensive growth by the visible disunion of the Christian community? For it can scarce admit to be called a society in its present torn and shattered state.

And again, its divisions being (as they cannot be other, than) criminal, the effect of indulged carnality, and designed to serve the carnal interest of this or that party, in opposition to the rest; they hereby not only offend and give scandal to the world, who thereupon discern nothing of peculiar excellency in the Christian profession, when

under it they see men driving but such low designs, as they themselves (more honestly) do without any such veil ; but they offend the Spirit of Christ too, who, thereupon, in great degrees, withdraws itself ; not totally, which could not consist with the promise, I am with you always, unto the end of the world ; but unto such degrees as shall testify displeasure. Mat. 28. 20. And hence is the growth of the church obstructed, not only naturally, but penally too. Whence it is most evident, that they cannot with judgment pray for the spiritual welfare of the church of Christ, who pray not for its union ; nor with sincerity, who to their uttermost endeavour it not also. Nor can there be true seriousness, insomuch, but the consideration must ensue, what course is most likely to serve so desired an end. And since necessary things are most plain, and less liable to dispute and doubt ; and it is matter of fact, obvious to every observing eye, that the disceptations and divisions in the Christian church, which are, and have been, from age to age, do for the most part arise from the addition of unnecessary things to it, which belong not to its constitution ; and which while some think lawful only, and at best, but an ornament to it, others think sinful and a deformity ; it cannot hence but appear a thing much to be desired, and endeavoured, that these occasions of offence and division might cease, and be removed. Which even they that think such additions, to be, for the matter of them lawful, might yet see reason enough to desire and to endeavour should be taken away ; yea, though they apprehend them of some use ; it being so manifest that the hurt which accrues by them is unspeakably more. And besides, one would think it should not be unapprehensible to any man that allows himself the free use of his thoughts, that though he should continue of the judgment, that such additions were in the matter of them lawful, yet the making them additional terms of Christian communion must be highly sinful, as being the introduction of a new Christianity. Christian communion being of christians as such.

But this amputation is, according to the present posture of men's minds all the Christian world over, a thing equally to be desired and despaired of : as a general union therefore is, in the mean time. We cannot unite with them who insist upon terms of union that we judge unlawful in those things. For those that insist upon terms that we think not simply unlawful, while yet they are different, in several Christian societies ; we cannot, therein, unite with any ; but we must, for ought we know, divide from as many. That only which the present state of things admits of, is, that we keep ourselves united in mind and spirit with all serious christians, in the plain and necessary things wherein they all agree : that we preserve in our own spirits a resolved unaddictedness to any party, in the things wherein they differ. That for actual and local communion (which we cannot have with all the christians in the world, and can have comparatively but with a few) we join with them that come nearest us, that is, that we judge come nearest to our common rule : that (as some means hereto)

we especially labour to centre in some such scheme of doctrinals, as for which all these profess to have a common reverence; that while our union cannot as yet be so extensive as it ought, it may be as extensive as we can; that the gospel be not hindered, and that our ministry may be the more successful and profitable to the promoting of the common salvation, among those that attend upon it. Such schemes or collections of doctrines, reduced into an order (as gold formed into a vessel, whereas truth, as it lies in the Holy Scriptures is as gold in the mass) may be of use (as they have always been used in the church in all ages) more distinctly to inform others concerning our sentiments (though the use is less, that after thorough search and inquiry they can be of to oneself) provided, they be avowed to be looked upon, but as a *mensura mensurata*, *measured rule*, reserving unto the Scriptures the honour of being the only *mensura mensurans*; *measuring rule*, and so that we only own them as agreeable to the Scriptures. And again, that we declare we take them to be agreeable thereto in the main, or for substance, without attributing a sacredness to the very words of a mere human composition: which indeed we cannot attribute to the words used in the translation of the Bible itself. And that for the things we believe them with a degree of assent proportionable to their greater or less evidence. This through the blessing of God, such as have used a sincere and ingenuous freedom one with another, have found an effectual expedient to deliver their minds from mutual doubt, concerning each other, that because of some different modes of expressing their sentiments, they held very different opinions, which they have found to be a mistake on one hand and the other; and have given and received satisfaction, they intended nothing that ought to be reckoned into the account of socinian, pelagian, popish, arminian or antinomian errors. That fraudulent and unjust way of making the estimate, being justly exploded, that whosoever shall in some things that touch not the main points of difference, say as some other of these do, must therefore be of their minds throughout. Which rule of judging would make any christian be taken for a jew, a mahometan, or a pagan: there being no intelligent Christian, but must say many things that they do.

But it is to be hoped this engine of the devil's is by the mercy of God broken, so as that the people shall be no more frightened from attending to the ministry of such (be their denomination what it will) as use apt and proper methods to awaken, convince and save souls by being told they are antinomians or arminians &c. It being upon inquiry found, that persons so and so charged, by the rash folly of some that understand nothing of the difference, besides the different sound of those odious names, do really detest the doctrines imputed to them. And that furthermore, while we look upon an agreement therein as a sufficient character of one sound in the faith, we do not profess to reckon every one of the things therein contained (without distinguishing their importance) necessary to that pur-

pose. And do never intend our communion shall be limited by other bounds than only an agreement in those things for doctrinals, which we take to be of such importance and necessity, as without the belief whereof a man cannot be a sincere christian. Which certainly cannot but be a very few, less disputed things, among them that profess to believe the divine authority of the Scriptures, and that will allow them to be interpreted according to the ordinary ways of interpreting other writings. That for matters of practice in the worship of God, we be satisfied, not to be obliged to do things, which we think unlawful ourselves, without entertaining the least surmise, but that many good men may judge some things lawful that we do not, and may practise accordingly. That we always keep ourselves in a prepared temper of spirit to receive further information about doubtful things. That we cherish in our souls a universal sincere love to christians as such ; and to men as men. That we studiously endeavour in our several stations the doing the most general good we can. And that our whole design do terminate upon what, so far as we can succeed in it, must be acknowledged by all good men to be a real service to the church of Christ, by gathering into it as many as we can, considering it as made up of persons that with judgment, and in practice own the very substance of Christian religion. With such dispositions of mind as these, we shall, in this divided state of the Christian church, be innocent of the sinful evil of its divisions, and keep as much as in us is, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And do we yet entertain in our minds any hope that the Christian religion shall spread, and be more generally propagated through the world ? Or do we desire it should ? Or do we dread that it should not, through our default ? Let us then look back to the years of ancient time, and consider what it was when it grew and increased mightily ; when without other advantages than its own self-recommending excellency, it every where made its own way, subdued nations, proselyted enemies, defied the most fervent oppositions and persecutions ; when the professors and preachers of it triumphed over martyrdoms, the fierceness and fury of wild beasts and flames, overcame by the blood of Jesus, and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives unto the death. When as Pliny (Plin Epist.) writing to Trajan in favour of the christians, intimates to him, they were every where so encreased both in cities and countries, that the pagan temples had lain almost quite desolate, and that there had scarce been any to buy off their sacrifices. When (about a hundred years after) Tertullian representing in apology for them, their peaceableness, and how easy it were, otherwise, to them to relieve themselves of their sufferings, says they were become so numerous in the empire, (*Apol. contra Gent.*) that if it were possible for them to withdraw themselves into some remote, obscure place, they who were left would even tremble at their own solitude. Christianity was then all life and spirit. The Christian church in those days flourished in purity, power, and vigour. But when for the space of about three hundred years together it had enjoyed the

protection and benignity of Christian emperors; and was hereby become wanton, lost in carnality, not content with itself, and its own native comeliness, but affected to shine in a borrowed lustre and ornament, when (as harlots are wont) it began to paint, to be fond of gay attire, and devise things for deckings to itself most alien from its original state and constitution, (and which afterwards became the matter of bloody contentions, and cruelties,) when it grew ambitious of secular pomp, splendor, grandeur, and power, then was it so forsaken of God, and his Spirit, that within a very few years after Boniface the third had obtained of the emperor Phocas the title of universal bishop, whereby popish tyranny and superstition became more fully *regnant* in the church, (that is within less than twenty years) began the senseless delusion of mahometanism to spring up without the church; and assisted by the incredible accession of force and arms, came at length to prevail against it (now gradually sinking more and more into vice and ignorance) unto that degree, that in process of time, what Christianity had gained from paganism, it lost in a great measure, unto mahometanism;† so that in several parts of Christendom, where were reckoned thirty christians for one pagan, there came to be thirty mahometans for one christian. And how next to unchristian the Christian world is, in the nearer countries (very generally protestant as well as popish) too well known: and in the remoter, divers writers inform us Ludolphus's *Æthiop: hist.* and divers others.

Let it now therefore be considered for how many sad centuries of years Christianity hath been at an amazing stand! got no ground upon the whole, but rather lost much. Is this the religion which so early, by its own native light and power conquered so many nations, and which we expect to be the religion of the world! Who that understands this, would not with deepest concern, and anxiety of spirit, inquire into the cause! And what cause can be so obvious to our inquiry, as a luxurious, and a contentious carnality; which both go together, and which have enfeebled, dispirited, and lost its self-diffusing life and strength? What we cannot remedy, let us at least see, and lament!

And let us supplicate more earnestly for the effusions of that Holy Spirit, which alone can give remedy to our distempers, and overcome the lusts of the flesh, of whatsoever kind, and restore Christian religion to itself, and make the Christian name great in the world. For can it content us that Christianity should appear, and be counted a mean, a weak, and even a ludicrous thing? that the Son of God should have descended, and come down into our world! have put on man! have died upon a cross! have ascended that he might fill all things! diffuse spirit, light and life through the world! have appointed prophets, apostles, pastors and teachers for the publishing his everlasting gospel; and at length leave men, even where the Christian name and profession doth obtain, no better men generally than he found them! distinguished only from the rest of the world, by certain peculiar notions, and by some different rites of worship; otherwise as flagitious, as sensual, as impious towards God, as full of wrath, hatred, malice and mischievous design towards one another, as any pagans or infidels ever were! and yet that they should expect

† See in Brentwood's inquiries.

to be saved, only because they are called christian! What a representation of Christian religion is this!

And thus it will be reckoned of, till it come to be understood more generally, and more openly avowed, that Christianity is not only a system of doctrines (and those reducible within a little compass) but of precepts also, not concerning the modes of worship only, but men's ordinary practice, and that not only respect their external actions, but which are designed to regulate and reform their minds and spirits, and do lay their first obligation there, must subdue their inordinate appetites and passions, render them holy and harmless, the sons of God, shining as lights, holding forth the word of life, &c. Phil. 2. 15. 16. The whole frame of the Christian institution being animated by the divine Spirit, into whose name we are baptized (as well as into that of the Father and the Son) and which will be given where he is sought for, and not affronted.

Let this be taken for Christianity and avowed to be so, and seriously endeavoured to be propagated as such, and it will not always be put to vie (but as upon equal terms) with mahometism, judaism, paganism, mere deism, or whatsoever else shall exalt itself into a competition with it. And let whatsoever comes not within this compass or is not truly and primitively christian, be resected and cut off from it, and so it will appear an entire self-agreeable thing; and the Christian church be but one. While it is not so, it will be the business and design of the most, only to promote the interest of this or that party. And if their sense were put into plain words, this it would be, "I am for my church or the church whereof I am, whatever becomes of the church of Christ." And so will a zealous endeavour for so narrow an interest, as that of a divided party engage and engross all the intention of their minds, and their religion be summed up in contention, and such only as hath its root in that division which (on the one side at least, and in great part too probably on both sides) chiefly proceeds from mere carnality. And what is it but religious contention, for the most part, that hath filled the Christian world with blood and ruins for many by past ages? Carnal contention, under this most specious pretence, as being conversant about spiritual or religious concerns, is the thing animadverted on (though in gentler instances, as later occasions did require) in the following sermons. It was little imagined when they were delivered from the pulpit, they should ever have been made more public. I have in this publication of them partly yielded to the opinion of divers, who judged they might possibly be useful to more than those who heard them, and to them farther upon review. But have more complied with a sort of necessity laid upon me, by being told if they were not published by me, the thing would be done (as it could) from broken, mistaken notes, without me. My own memorials and preparations were indeed imperfect enough, as it cannot but be in the case of one, so often in the week, engaged in such work. I have, as I could, by my own recollection, and by such help as I have otherwise had, endeavoured a full account of what was spoken, and am very confident nothing material is omitted. (Some ingeminations or

varied expressions of the same thing, that are pardonable, if not useful to a hearer, but not so grateful, and less needful to a reader, I reckon not such.) But divers passages (though not distinct heads) that were intended, but through want of time omitted, I have inserted in the places to which they did belong. Wherein none can think there is any wrong done. I am sensible the introductive part should have been in some respects, otherwise methodized. But I am content to let it go as it is, though I find, by the notes that were brought me, that some things were somewhat transposed (otherwise than was intended) in the delivery, from a memory, not the most faithful.

If it do any good, it must be from the supply of the good Spirit of God, which I admonish all you that read seriously to seek, and ask from him, who hath promised, thereupon it shall be given. The very expectation whereof will prevent reading with a vain mind, or ill design, and the consequent danger of receiving hurt by what you read.

Yours in our common Lord,

J. H.

THE CARNALITY
OF
RELIGIOUS CONTENTION.

Gal. v. xvi.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil
the lust of the flesh.*

THE last time I spake to you from these words, having largely opened before the import of *walking in the Spirit*, I undertook to shew you how *the flesh* here is to be understood, against the lusts whereof such walking in the Spirit is the prescribed remedy. In the general you have been told, that flesh is here to be taken morally, and in that latitude, as to signify all sorts of moral evil, or the general depravedness of our corrupt nature : for though sometimes in the moral acceptation the sense is limited (as hath formerly been shewed) to grosser sins, in contradistinction to more refined, as 2. Cor. 7. 1. and 1 John 2. 16. yet sometimes also it is so far extended, as to signify all sins, as Col. 2. 11. compared with Rom. 6. 6. And in this context it is plain the apostle comprehends sins of both these sorts under this one expression.

But what particular evils he more especially intended here to censure and caution these Galatian christians against, under this one name, cannot better be understood than by consulting this context itself ; in which, though we cannot say we have a full enumeration ; we have yet very many instances, of the carnalities against which this remedy is directed. Some of them more gross, (as we have told you they might be distinguished) adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, murder, drunkenness, revellings ; and some

other that may seem more refined, not as having less, but only a more subtle malignity in them; such as hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, &c. It may here be thought strange, that such sins as these should be animadverted upon in Christian churches, (as this epistle is inscribed to such, the churches of Galatia, chap. 1. 2.) so soon after the gospel was come among them, the apostle himself thought it strange; for you find him wondering at it, chap. 1. 6. I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, to another gospel. Yea, and after that, with the gospel, they had received the Spirit too. For it is said, chap. 3. 2, 3. This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? And are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, do you think to be made perfect by the flesh?

We are therefore to consider what sort of persons and doctrines they were that corrupted and depraved those churches; and whereby it will be the more apprehensible by what kind of insinuations they so far prevailed: and we may collect, in very great part, what they were, from divers passages of this epistle itself; and indeed, from this very context. Some would have us think the persons were of that sect called gnostics, from their pretended and highly boasted knowledge. We have no evidence that this sect was so early known by this name; but it is very likely they were that sort of men that were afterwards so called. The characters here given them in this and the other apostolical epistles do much agree with what divers of the more ancient Christian writers, and one pagan one, (Plotinus) says of that sect. Which pagan, an interpreter, and great admirer of his (Marsil. Ficinus.) would fain have pass for a christian, because living in a time when the controversy between Christianity and paganism was at the height, he says nothing against Christianity itself, but speaks very much against these Pseudo-Christians, whom though that author mentions not by that name, this his interpreter often doth it for him, inserting "The gnostics" even when he is but translating, into the body of the work itself.

But this less concerns us. It is however, out of question, that this sort of men very anciently called gnostics, did highly vaunt their great knowledge. A very tempting specious pretence! Though their sublimer notions, (about the Æons, &c.) were imaginations only: fancy and not knowledge, or *γνωσις ψευδω-
νιμου*, *knowledge misnamed*, or falsely so called, (as we may borrow the apostle's expressions, 1 Tim. 6. 20. though those inventions were later) and could only serve to fill the minds of their proselytes with wind and vanity.

But their doctrines upon which the apostle animadverts in this epistle, we may collect from the manifest scope and design of it; and that was to assert *justification by faith without the works of the law*, which they greatly perverted; and *sanc-tification by the Spirit of Christ*, or the doctrine of the *new creature*, which they even quite subverted. With which false doctrines they conjoined a most impurely vicious life and practice; falling in much with the jews in their corrupt doctrines, and with the pagans in their licentious practice. Which must be equally tempting to carnal minds.

And this may make it appear less strange, that all these sorts of carnality, that are here mentioned in this context from ver. 15. to the 21st. should, in reference to the same sort of men, be so put together. For it is evident they were partly a judaizing, and partly a paganizing sort of christians; as (for ends of their own) they affected to call themselves. They held it lawful for christians to join with pagans in their solemnities of worship, which they were wont to celebrate in the temples of their idols. It is notorious how gross impurities and immoralities were in those days incorporated into the paganish worship; such as made it sufficiently reasonable that idolatry should have in conjunction with it, fornication and adultery, uncleanness and lasciviousness. And for the addition of witchcraft, it was not unaccountable, there being sorceries, magical rites and diabolical incantations observed to have been intermingled with the *sacra* of the pagans. And for which these (misnamed) christians might have the greater kindness also, for the sake of Simon Magus, the father of their sect, by whom the affection thereof was transmitted to some of his noted followers, that thought it a glorious thing to vie with their predecessor in this sort of excellency.

Nor is it alien from this purpose to take notice, that those diabolical rites are said to have obtained among the paganish idolaters of drinking the warm blood of their sacrifices, and of eating things strangled with the blood in them, upon the imagination that in their so doing, they did partake of the very spirit of their gods whom they worshipped; and it is not altogether unsupposeable that the devil might, in some unusual manner, enter into them at those times, more violently agitating their blood and other humours; in the higher ferments whereof, if by the directer influence of the great enemy of mankind, quarrels and murders (as was not unlikely) should also sometimes ensue, it could not but heighten the sport and triumphs of hell.

And that the decree of the apostles and elders, Acts 15. might have such a reference, prohibiting these things conjunctly, idolatry and fornication, and things strangled, and blood;

that they should by no means mingle with the pagans in these horrid rites, a learned modern writer of our own hath rendered very probable. * And hereto those vehement dehortations of the apostle must answerably be understood to refer, 1 Cor. 10. 7—11. remonstrating to them, that they could not have fellowship with the Lord's table, and the table of devils. And I would not, says he, that you should have fellowship with devils. For though he did not judge it unlawful to eat of the *idolothyta*, that is, things offered to idols, being sold in the shambles, he yet most earnestly protests against their presuming to mingle and partake in the horrid diabolical rites, and impure practices that were wont to be used at their festivals in the idol's temples.

All thoughts of being by their Christianity obliged and enabled unto strict purity and holiness of heart and life, were out of doors with these seducers, and endeavoured to be extinguishing in such as they could work to a compliance with them: whereof the apostle seemed deeply apprehensive, when he so earnestly inculcates, that in Christ Jesus (or in the Christian state) neither circumcision nor uncircumcision were of any avail, but a new creature, and faith working by love.

But it must seem of all things the most unaccountable and incongruous, that men of so profligate sentiments and practices, should be for introducing a justification by the works of the law, in opposition to that by the faith of Christ. It is manifest they hated the holy design of Christian religion, which they professed; and professed it, that they might have better opportunity to undermine it. Hereupon (not opening at once all the arcana of their way) they carry answerably to persons and occasions as they occurred; and as the apostle was all things to all, that he might save some, so were they, that they might pervert and destroy. To the Christian jews one thing, to the Christian gentiles another. In this their doctrine they did most plausibly judaize, in their impure practices they verged more to paganism. Pretending to Christian converts from among them, that Christ never intended to tie them to strict severities, or hold them under an uneasy bondage; whereto the apostle seems to refer, chap. 5. 13. Ye have been called (he grants) to liberty, but use not (saith he) your liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

Thus we must suppose that they differently applied themselves to such as they designed to make their proselytes, endeavouring to accommodate themselves in one of these to one sort of men, and to another sort in the other. In dealing with the jewish christians they not only denied the doctrine of justi-

* Dr. Spencer de Ritibus Hebræorum.

fication by faith, (opposing thereto that of justification by the works of the law) but calumniated it too, as if it tended to infer a liberty to sin, and make Christianity subservient to wickedness, whereof they knew their own to be more guilty. A piece of monstrous impudence (but usual with men of such foreheads) to endeavour the averting that charge from themselves, to which they were most manifestly liable, by first charging it on the innocent.

Hereto the apostle hath a manifest reference, when having first asserted against them justification by faith only, Gal. 2. 16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. He then vindicates the assertion against their imputation, that it made Christ a patron to men's sins; If (saith he) while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, Is Christ therefore the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ, and am in and with him dead unto all sin, so as not to be under the dominion of any; and death never more had dominion over him, when he had once died. And whereas they thus objecting against the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, that it ministered unto sin, or made Christ a minister thereunto, were liable to have the objection retorted upon them, being a sort of men themselves so very infamously wicked; for this they had a double *salvo*, both of which the apostle doth industriously refute. That is, from the two parts of the law given by Moses, and the two sorts of the works of the law enjoined thereby, that is, the moral and the ritual or ceremonial part. In reference to the former, they fall in with those jewish conceits of the merit of their good works, done from the principle of free will: and that in order to their justification, this merit was to be measured by the preponderation of their good works to their bad,* and that it was possible that one good work in some cases might turn the scale: that is, if they were equal before. Now this the apostle occurs to, by shewing that they that were under the law were under a curse: for that if they continued not in all things written in the law to do them, all they did was nothing, as you may see, chap. 3. of this epistle, ver. 10.

* See at large to this purpose Smith's select discourses upon this subject.

And then as to the ritual or ceremonial part, because their sacrifices were in great part expiatory of sin, and divers of their other performances carried a great shew of sanctity and piety in them: which their expiatory sacrifices could only be, as they were representative of the one propitiation, and their other observances were nothing to their sanctity, if the thing they were designed to signify, did not accompany the sign. They imagined they were not to signify its presence, but to supply its absence. This notion did obtain even with the stricter sort of them, the pharisees themselves, who thereupon made very light of the weightier matters of the law, reckoning that though they were guilty of many immoralities in practice, their exact observances of the rites and ceremonies enjoined by Moses, would go far to make an amends; and that their paying tythe of mint, annis and cummin, would serve instead of judgment, faith, mercy, and the love of God, which they are said to pass over as very light and small matters. See Matth. 23. 23. compared with Luke 11. 42. And herein the apostle contests with these Galatian christians, not only with vehemency, but with some kind of wonder, that when gospel light had come among them, and that having known God, or rather been known of him, as chap. 4. 9. they should attribute any thing to so beggarly rudiments as these were; that is, being circumcised, and keeping days, and months, and years, &c. the things whereon they laid so great stress. And because they did so, he tells them in that 4th chapter, that he was afraid that he had bestowed labour in vain among them.

In sum therefore, he makes it his business to evidence to them, that both their justification and their sanctification must be conjoined and arise together out of one and the same root, Christ himself, and by faith in him (without the works of the law) as that which must vitally unite them with him, and that thereby they should become actually interested in all his fulness; that fulness of righteousness which was to be found only in him, and no where but in him; and withal, in that fulness of Spirit and life, and holy influence, which also was only in him; so as that the soul being united by this faith with Christ, must presently die to sin and live to God, chap. 2. 19. 20. And at the same time when he delivered a man from the law as dead to it, he became to him a continual living spring of all the duty, which God did by his holy rule require and call for, and render the whole life of such a man a life of devotedness to God.

And it is here by the way worth the while to observe how the apostle himself expounds that phrase of being dead to the law by being delivered from it, Rom. 7. 1, ——— 6. And no

man can be said to be delivered from any thing, as it is a good, or an advantage to him, but as it is an evil, and doth him hurt. And the law hurts no man as a rule of life. But as to one stated under the full power of it, it is a bar against that great blessing of the Spirit, (chap. 3. 13, 14.) which by its yet abiding curse it keeps off from him, hereby occasioning his continuance in sin, and then condemning him for it. Whereupon how clear is the current of the discourse in these words, namely, By the law I am dead to the law, that I might live to God; I am crucified with Christ, yet I live. As though he had said, The law itself hath slain me, and killed all my hopes and expectations from it: the same law that slew Christ, hath slain me. I am crucified with him; which supposes his being in him by that faith by which he was to live ever after. In this faith stood his marriage to Christ, who succeeds into the room of the law, as the case is stated, Rom. 7. 1,—3. &c. They that were settled, in reference to each other, in the conjugal state, as the law and the sinner were; upon the death of the one (which soever it be) the relation ceases, and so the obligation which depended upon that relation. And thereupon, says he, the law itself having given me my death's wound, and killed me as to it, in the article of dying, I join myself to Christ, and yield to be crucified with him, but therein acquire with him a new life. Nevertheless I live; And how? Not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me. And this life I now thus live, is a life of pure and absolute devotedness to God; terminated upon his interest and glory as the *end* of it, governed by his declared will, as the *rule* of it. That is, in sum, it is a holy life, or (as before) it is a living to God. Whereupon he so copiously distinguishes, chap. 3. between Jews and Jews, those that were born after the flesh, and those born of the Spirit, the sons of the bond-woman, and of the free, (as he allegorically speaks,) signifying the latter only born into this new state of life. By all which he shews the connection to be most necessary and inviolable, between being justified by faith in Christ, and a life of holiness; so little opposite were these to one another, that one and the same faith was to infer both.

But now that the large extent of this holiness of life, might more fully appear, the apostle signifies, that it must not only exclude those grosser lusts and works of the flesh, but also such, as because they might seem somewhat more refined, might be reckoned by some less criminal, he therefore inserts divers of this other kind also: and the state of the case did equally require it. For it appears (as it might well be supposed

ed) that so far as any were tainted with the false notions, and with inclinations to the impure practices before mentioned, they were filled with animosities, with wrath, envyings and hatred towards them that had not received the taint; and they might have too much place with these back again towards them. Whereupon there could not but be very great and high ferments in these churches. Nothing therefore could be more requisite, or seasonable, than that several instances of this sort of carnality, should be put into this catalogue, namely, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, &c. For they were not to be thought (as was said) more refined, as having less; but a more subtle energy, or penetrative power of malignity in them. Nor indeed hath Christianity, and the Christian church suffered more by any sort of evils, than by those of this sort. Others destroy particular persons: these, besides their doing so, do more directly hurt the community, and tend to waste and destroy the church.

Now as to those grosser carnalities mentioned in this context, I did formerly say somewhat briefly, and so I did as to that which seems the central one among those of this latter sort, namely, that of heresy: which I considered according to what it doth import in itself, and did design also to consider it in this its concomitancy, namely, of the things here mentioned in so near conjunction, and that are of nearer affinity with it, hatred, envyings, and the like. I have indeed been since in some suspense whether I should pursue that intention or no; but upon serious consideration, and solemn looking up to heaven for direction, I have determined not to let this sort of carnality pass without just animadversion. For I consider that I speak to a Christian assembly, who must be understood all to profess equal, and impartial reverence to the word of God, as to a revelation come down from heaven, for our direction and conduct thither. And therefore none dare, upon serious thoughts, allow in themselves any kind of regret or disgust, as to so material and important a part of this holy word. We are assured the words of God will do good to them that walk uprightly, that is, to upright-hearted ones; who it must therefore be supposed will walk or deal uprightly in their attendance thereunto. And I cannot but hope that God will graciously help us to speak, and hear with that uprightness and integrity of heart that this word of his may do good to some, without doing hurt to any.

In speaking therefore to this sort of carnality, (for we must mention it by such a term as the Holy Ghost hath thought fit to be put upon it) I shall *First* note to you some previous things more generally, and then shall, *Secondly*, let you see

what appearances there may be of it in such a case as the apostle's present discourse hath reference unto.

First. It will be of use to us, more generally, to note these few things :

1. That the several expressions of it which we find in this context, in closer connection with heresy, as it were guarding it before and behind, namely, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, do all note but one radical evil, and do all agree in one root. Whereupon it will be the less needful to insist upon them severally, or to give you the criticism of each word by itself; which it were a great deal more easy to do, than it will be useful, or of any avail to us. What I shall say therefore will be more general; but will however give you the occasion of casting your eye upon the particulars, whereby you will have the more distinct account of that carnality, which is here referred to by the apostle.

2. This is needful to be noted too, that this precept of the apostle considered as a prescription against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, has more immediate and direct reference to this sort of carnality. This is plain, if you will but again peruse the words as they lie in their closest connexion. For when he had said in the 14th verse, That all the law is fulfilled in this one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, (most of all, no doubt, one's Christian neighbour) he adds, But if you bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not devoured one of another. Then immediately come in the words of the text, this I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. As though he had said, The lust of the flesh will be working this way, putting you upon biting and devouring one another. According as sentiments begin to differ, and minds are divided, inclinations will carry one this way, and another that; and then you will be too prone to be at biting, and be ready to fall to devouring one another. Now I have no better remedy to prescribe you against both than this, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. I should have been a very unfaithful interpreter of this context to you, if I had not taken notice of this so immediate connexion.

3. This is further to be noted, that this sort of carnality that lies in strifes, in emulations, in envyings, in hatred, &c. may come to have its occasion of being exercised, of working, lusting, and exerting itself about the doctrines of the gospel: than which nothing is more evident, in that you find that these things are put in connexion with heresies, which must be understood to be a corruption of gospel-doctrine. Very true indeed it is, that the word heresy, among the more ancient philoso-

phers, was used in a more gentle, and no way infamous sense, signifying only this or that sect of philosophers. But the word coming to be borrowed and transferred by sacred writers into the holy Scriptures, there it is mostly taken in a very ill sense, (though not always) as signifying error or corruption in doctrine, of a very high and destructive nature, as Tit. 3. 10, 11. 2 Pet. 2. 1. For though all heresy be error, or carries error in it; yet all error is not heresy; that must be such error as strikes at the root, and is conjunct with heart disaffection and malignity, (as was noted the last time) standing in opposition to faith, which is not a merely mental thing, but lies very principally in the heart. Doctrinal matters are however here referred unto, even in the very notion of heresy, and therefore about those matters these carnalities may have place. For when the several passions here mentioned are raised, and do tumultuate in the breasts of this and that particular person, they soon and easily spread and propagate themselves to others, so as to infect the community. And then it comes to the forming of it into parties, or dividing it into two sides, as the word *διχνομασία* (which we translate *seditions*;) signifies; the one stated and posited as in an hostile posture against the other, till at length the matter arrive to that height and pitch of contumacious and fixed obstinacy, as in matters so important as the apostle's discourse reflects upon, will complete the notion of heresies, namely, on one side, at least; not, perhaps, without great faultiness on the other, which comes next to be noted.

4. As such carnality may have place and exercise about gospel-doctrine, so it is very possible it may shew itself on both sides, even on their part who have the *truth* with them, as well as on theirs who oppose it, and make it their business to propagate the contrary error or false doctrine. The very defence of truth itself may be accompanied with such carnalities, such strife, wrath, malice, envy, as divides the guilt between the divided parties, and leaves neither side innocent.

I am, you know, by mere providence, in the series and tract of a discourse long continued upon this context, led to say what I now do; and I have therefore the more hope, that through the blessing of God, it may be of some use to us. But this comes most directly under our notice; and let it be noted, that whereas in such contests both sides are wont to be confident they are in the right; neither the one nor the other may be over-confident or careless of not being in the wrong, in what may be of equal or greater importance than the matters themselves, disputed among them that agree in the substantial of religion, or that hold the head, can be. Let us I say, deep-

ly consider it, that such sinful carnality may have place, and exercise not only about religious concerns, but even on that side, where the truth lies; which is from hence evident, that the apostle immediately before the text, as I have noted, says, If you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not bitten and consumed one of another. A great aptitude he therefore observed there was, to be biting on both sides, even where the truth lay, and where it lay not.

For we are here further to observe, that whereas our apostle sadly considered that many among these christians of Galatia were lapsed, and fallen from the purity and sincerity of religion; he apprehended too, that they who were not so fallen, took not the best course for the recovery of them that were. Which that admonition of his must mean, chap. 6. 1, 2. Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. It seems he reckoned that the sounder part among them, and that ought (and it is like thought themselves) to be more spiritual, while they shewed not more of a spirit of meekness towards the lapsed, were not so spiritual as they should be, and discovered more carnality than became them, more wrath and bitterness of spirit than could comport with the law of Christ. They will be little awed by this, and be apt for all this to indulge their own furious passions, that think he hath no law. But though one were never so sure he hath the truth on his side, it is in itself a dreadful thing, to whomsoever shall allow himself the liberty seriously to think of it. For what must we conceive of such truth, that is to be defended in some cases, I say, that in some cases ought to be so? We must surely conceive of it as a divine, a sacred thing, a heaven-born thing, a thing of heavenly descent, part of a revelation immediately come forth from the very bosom of God; so is the whole gospel-revelation to be looked upon. Now here is carnality that lusts; such a kind of carnality as the context speaks of, wrath, strife, hatred, &c. Here is such carnality, lusting, actually lusting, seeking prey, ravening for food. And what doth it feed upon? No meaner thing than divine truth! evangelical doctrines! Monstrous thought! Consider, I beseech you, my friends, what this comes to? The feeding an impure lust upon sacred things, or upon that which is divine! I must have my lust satisfied, says the proud, contentious spirit: wrath burns, anger boils; sacred things are not spared, but fallen upon, as the prepared food of lust. It will be fed, they are not forborn. All reverence of God is forgotten, heaven is ravaged, the most sacred mysteries of God's

own kingdom are violated, and torn this way, and that (O horrid thing!) by harpies, vultures, by most fierce and furious lusts. And if a man would know, recognize, take knowledge of the most deeply inward sensations and intention of his own heart, thus it is, I must now apply my thoughts, bend my mind, to consider a revelation come from heaven; And for what? For the end for which it was given, to enlighten, purify, quicken my soul towards God, renew and form it for God, to serve and enjoy him? No, But on purpose to feed, to gratify a lust! We can (too often) make neither better nor worse of it, but just so it is.

These things being premised, I would now go on a little more particularly to shew you,

Secondly. Wherein carnality may appear exerting itself, even about such things, or what will be manifest indications of such a carnality, as is here referred unto, acting about, or in reference to the things of God, the most sacred and important truths and doctrines of his gospel.

1. When in comparison of some less things, wherein we find occasion or pretence to differ, little account is made of the incomparably greater things, wherein all serious christians are agreed, and wherein they really cannot but be agreed. Let it but be considered whether pains be not taken to devise some matter or other to contend about: (that shews a great disposition,) and then having found out some minuter things about which to differ, our differences, as little as they are, quite swallow up our agreements. The whole gospel signifies nothing, (though full of the most glorious wonders) in comparison of some punctilios, either that we have invented, or that it may be doubted whether there be any thing in them or nothing. Here is some mystery in all this! A lust is to be gratified; an appetite to contend. This winds and wriths, this way and that, loath to appear but under some specious disguise of zeal for truth, indignation against false doctrine, or the like; but it betrays itself, and unawares, shews its ugly serpentine head. For if the thing chosen out to be the matter of contest be thought worth so much, when it is manifestly either in comparison, little, or nothing but a figment, why are not the things on all hands most confessedly great, and most evident, more highly esteemed, loved, relished, and with gust and delight fed upon? Why do not the greater things signify more to unite us in love and communion with all that agree with us in them, than the lesser things to divide us, about which we disagree? Indeed the disagreements were in themselves vastly great between the untainted christians of these Galatian churches, and that horrid sect that the apostle's discourse has manifest reference unto. Blessed be God there are not such disagreements amongst us.

But while there is less taint of error in our minds, (as to these things) are we not concerned to take heed there be not as great a taint of this vicious carnality in our hearts? It speaks too much of it; when having devised a difference, we are prone to overlook and make little account of the great things wherein we are entirely and most professedly agreed.

If we consider the things which the doctrinal part of this epistle doth more expressly refer to, as I have noted already, how great things in reference hereto are we fully agreed in? We are all agreed, that a sinner, an apostate lapsed creature, can never be saved and brought to a blessed state, but he must be justified, and he must be sanctified. He must be justified, to make his state safe; he must be sanctified, to make the temper of his spirit good, capable of communion with God in this world, and of final eternal blessedness with him in the other. We are agreed, that such justification and such sanctification are both the effects of most absolutely free and sovereign grace, that none could be ever justified, but by freest grace; that none can ever be sanctified but by freest grace, most absolutely and most sovereignly free. We are agreed, that the highest perfection of sanctification that can ever possibly be attained unto, signifies nothing at all to deserve, to procure by merit our justification. We are agreed, that both, as they are from the most free and sovereign grace, so they do come through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the alone Mediator between God and man: that the righteousness is entirely and only Christ's, by which we are justified: that the Spirit is most entirely and only Christ's, by which we are sanctified; according to that in 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10, 11. Such as are mentioned there were before the grossest and vilest of sinners, fornicators, adulterers, idolaters &c. And such (saith the apostle) were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

You cannot but be in all these agreed. We are agreed, that whoever does sincerely, evangelically believe in God through Christ, receiver Christ, is united with him, or is in him; who doth by serious repentance turn to God, whose heart is won to love him in truth as his highest and best good, who is conformed to the image of his Son; and who having been made willing in the day of his power, doth now render a sincere obedience to him; every such one is in a safe state, accepted with God, has found grace in his eyes.

For no words of Scripture can be plainer, than that they that believe on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life, John 3. 16. Yea, that they have it, ver. 36. that life is begun with them, which is never to end, or which is in the sure

way to be continued till it become everlasting : that they that repent, and turn from all their transgressions, their iniquities shall not be their ruin, Ezek. 18. 30. that God hath prepared the things which eye hath not seen—for them that love him, and will give them the crown of life according to his own promise, (1 Cor. 2. 9. Jam. 1. 12.) that Christ doth become the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, (Heb. 5. 9.) that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, (Rom. 8. 1.) that it must turn wholly to the praise of the glory of his grace, that God makes them accepted in the beloved. Eph. 1. 6. We do all agree, that they that do never believe, they that never repent, they that never love God, they that are never brought to obey him, that live in enmity and rebellion against him to the last breath, must needs be in a lost state, are never justified, never accepted with God, are liable unto coming, and abiding wrath, and remain under condemnation, John 3. 16, 36. Luke 13. 3. Col. 3. 6. We agree, that such faith, such repentance, such love to God, such obedience, even in the most entire sincerity, are not to be considered at all, as any cause of such a person's acceptance with God: they do characterize the accepted person, but they cause it not, they deserve nothing; nay, they could not, if they were perfect. No internal work of the Holy Ghost, though in this our present state, it were most absolutely perfect, so as to exclude every thing of sin, could be any part of that righteousness that must justify us before God. To suppose that it could, would be manifestly to confound the offices of the Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost. It was Christ that was to merit for us; the Holy Ghost was never to merit for us. It was not the Holy Ghost that died for us, nor can his operations or productions in us have any causative influence to the meriting the justified and accepted state of any person before God. They were never meant for that purpose, nor have any aptitude or accommodateness thereunto. They cannot make us never to have sinned; nor can atone for our having done so. We cannot but be agreed in this, for it is plain, and carries its own evidence in itself: that is, suppose we a person, as soon as he is converted, made perfectly free from sin, that very moment, by some extraordinary powerful work of the Holy Ghost on his soul, how shall that expiate for his having been a sinner? Now where there are so great things wherein we agree, and we make little of them; things that should raise up our souls, and awaken all our powers unto the highest acts of love, gratitude and praise to God and our Redeemer, and fill us with wonder and pleasure as often as we think of them; an indisposition of mind to take notice of, and con-

sider such things, so as to improve and use them to the great purposes of the Christian life, as incentives to the love of God, an entire devoting of ourselves to him, vigorous and diligent serving of him, and walking holily and comfortably with him in our daily course; through a greater disposition to contend about we well know not what besides, too plainly shews much of that carnal disaffection, which the apostle doth here animadvert upon. There are other things belonging to this same purpose that I find I cannot reach to at this time.

SERMON II.

Gal. v. xvi.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil
the lust of the flesh.*

I HAVE begun to shew you by what indications much carnality may appear, and show itself in and about spiritual matters. As, (for instance) in the controverting, yea, even in the defending the truths of the gospel, and intend now to proceed. You have heard it does so,

1. When christians, who are very far agreed in the most important things, make little of the things wherein they are agreed though never so great; in comparison of the much less things wherein they differ. As all serious christians must be understood to agree in far greater things than it is possible for them to differ in. I lately mentioned to you sundry great agreements that I cannot doubt to be very common with serious and intelligent christians, which I shall not now stay to repeat, but add,

2. Such carnality shows itself, when there is too much aptness to lay greater stress than is needful upon some unscriptural words in delivering Scripture doctrine. Here we may take carnality as the apostle doth, 1 Cor. 3. 3. While there are divisions among you, are you not carnal, and walk (or act) as men?

There is more of the man in it than of the christian; when we can make a shift to divide about a word, and that (in the present use of it) devised only by man; when words that are merely of human stamp, and used in no such sense, or to no such purpose in Scripture; however they may be significant, yet too great a stress and weight is laid upon them, either by too stiffly adhering to them on the one hand, or too vehemently decrying them on the other hand; while (perhaps, and it is a certain and a known case) the meaning may be the same on both sides, and would be so, or would appear to be so, if such and such words were waved, and others more understood, were chosen, and used in the room of them. It is true, we are not to think (and no man of sense can) that we are obliged never to use other words in such matters, but such as the translators of the Bible have hit on in their version of it, as if that must consecrate those words, and leave all other under a profane character. But if it appear that any word of a doubtful signification, is misunderstood by many, creates offence, and through some fixed, immovable prejudice, or prepossession that some other notion of it hath obtained in the minds of many, it will always be otherwise understood by them than we intend, let it rather go for a *nehushtan*, than that the peace of the church should be broken, and men's minds be disturbed and disquieted by it. This is the case, when any such words that might be arbitrarily used or laid aside, are made so necessary, or so destructive, as if all religion were saved or lost by them: when one so cries up such a word, as if he would say, "The heavens must fall if I have not my word." And another decries it as much, as if he said, "They must fall if it be admitted, or if I have not mine." Sure there must be in this case that forbidden *λογομαχίας*, of which the apostle speaks in that 1 Tim. 6. 4. which they are usually most apt to be guilty of, that are also guilty of what is put in conjunction therewith, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds; with these falls in this strife of words: whether that be to be understood objectively, or instrumentally, strife about words, or wordy strifes, I shall not here determine. But that whole context is worth our considering, ver. 3, 4, 5. If any man teach otherwise, do *ετεροδιδασκαλει*, teach other, or *alien* things, or after another or *alien* manner, and consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness: (4.) he is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions, and strife of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings: (5.) perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself. And therewith agrees what we find also mentioned, with the charge of avoiding

them, 2 Tim. 2. 23. Foolish and unlearned questions that gender strifes. Some may fancy they make themselves considerable for learning by such altercations: but the apostle slurs that conceit, calling them unlearned. So I remember Seneca (*De Brev. Vita.*) says of the greeks, (calling it their disease) that they made much ado with certain idle questions, (as, how many rowers belonged to the vessel that carried Ulysses? and such like, that he there mentions) whereby, says he, they did not appear more learned, but only more troublesome.

3. when we consider with too little indulgence one another's mistakes and misapplications, in the use even of Scripture words, placing them as some may do, upon things to which they do not properly belong, when yet they agree about the things themselves. There are words in the Scripture-revelation, that it may be the one or the other of disagreeing persons may apply to one thing, when the other (perhaps truly) thinks they belong more properly to another. There is an inconvenience in this: the case is much as if one should have an idea of all the streets of London in his mind as they lie, but he mistakes the names, and transposes them. As for instance, calls cheap-side cornhill, or cornhill cheap-side. He does not speak so intelligibly to another, but at the same time may have the same idea in his mind of London that another has. And this however, when it occurs in religious disceptations, ought to be considered (though there be an inconvenience in it) with indulgence, as knowing we are all liable to mistakes in greater matters. And as it is possible there may be somewhat of carnality, some perverseness, some cloud arising from infirm flesh that darkens the mind, and occasions it so to mistake; so it is much greater, not to be able to bear in another such a mistake.

4. When there is an agreement about the main and principal things that the Scripture-revelation contains and carries in it; but there is not that agreement about their mutual respects and references unto one another. This is a matter indeed of greater importance; there can be no true scheme given of gospel truths and doctrines, if such their references and respects to one another be not rightly understood. But an entire true scheme of Christian doctrines will not enter into all minds; and for the most part they are particular passages, or particular truths, that strike hearts, and that God makes use of to do souls good by. And if so entire a scheme will not enter into the minds of many, whether through their darkness or ignorance, or whether through any thing of prejudice, that was as it were forelaid in their minds: nothing remains but to be patient of it, and to do them what good we can, even upon their

own terms, and in the way wherein they are capable of it. There was such an obstruction in minds among these Corinthians, even upon this very account of their carnality, as we see in that 3d. of the 1st. epistle, that the apostle tells them, I could not speak to you as spiritual, (it must be understood comparatively) but as unto carnal; and therefore as a wise instructor, thought it needful to keep back, to with-hold some things from them that he reckoned might be meat to them, solid meat, strong meat, because they had been hitherto unable to bear it, nor were yet able. It is in that case needful rather somewhat to *ἐπιχειρῶν*, to with-hold some things, or suspend, than by a continued and too urgent inculcation to frustrate one's own design; and while we would have all enter into less capable minds, to have nothing enter. It may sometimes be, that when too much is endeavoured at once to be borne in upon them against an invincible obstruction, we only engage them to fortify the more strongly, and shut out all; and so we defeat ourselves. They gain nothing, and our whole design is frustrated and lost. In all our applications to the souls of men, there must be patient waiting, and very gradual endeavours used, without force and furious striving; yea, in our having to do with such as are yet the very vassals and captives of the devil. So the apostle speaks, 2 Tim. 2. 24. The servant of the Lord should not strive but be patient towards (even all) men, and wait (even in reference to them that are hitherto altogether impenitent) when God will give them repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, that are led captive by him at his will. Much more are such methods to be used towards them, who call on the name of our Lord out of a pure heart, as he speaks a little above in the same context, ver. 22. And consider the extent and endearingness of this character. It is to be deplored that it extends not further: but so far as it doth extend, God forbid it should not have a most persuasive efficacy and power upon our spirits, to make us follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, even with all them that bear that character, that is, that call on the Lord with a pure heart: their Lord (as it is elsewhere) as well as ours; be they of what party, or denomination, soever.

5. Much of this carnality appears about such matters, when we are over intent to mould and square gospel truths and doctrines by human measures and models, and too earnestly strive to make them correspond; that is, when we aim, beyond what things can admit, to stretch (or rather to shrink and contract) God's transactions with men, unto the scheme and model of our own abstract notions and definitions, or of merely human, civil, or political economies, administrations and transactions; such

I mean as obtain among men towards one another : and so labour to have the same measures take place throughout in reference to divine things, as do in human. Whereby more than is needful, useful, (or indeed so much as possible to agree and quadrate) of logic, metaphysics ; and of civil and other law is introduced into theology. Illustrations indeed may be taken thence, but not strict measures. It is impossible sometimes they should be so. Divers things are taken among men in such notions, as, in delivering the doctrine of the gospel cannot have a full and adequate place : they often will not exactly agree or correspond. As if in speaking of God's pardoning and justifying a sinner, we should take our measures of pardon and justification strictly from what obtains amongst men, we shall find a great difference and disagreement. For plain it is, that, according to human measures, the same person cannot be both pardoned and justified. He that is pardoned cannot be justified, and he that is justified, cannot be pardoned. But according to divine and gospel-measures both are truly said of the same person. In the one case there is an inconsistency, in the other a fair agreement of the same things. He that is at a human bar a justified person, needs no pardon, his case admits of none : if he were justified, pardon were absurdly talked of : and so if he were pardoned, that does plainly imply that he was not justified. It is quite otherwise if you bring these things to the gospel, and God's dealing with sinners. I cannot now spend time in shewing you distinctly how these things do lie, and are very capable of being accommodated in the sinners case ; some resemblance will appear, not an exact or entire correspondency. The instance however serves our present purpose, to shew that God's procedure and methods in his dispensations towards men, will not in all things square with human measures.

Again, If we speak of the doctrine of God's covenant in Jesus Christ, we cannot take our measures from human covenants that pass between man and man, especially one private man and another ? for there the persons are under no obligation before their mutual consent. It is not so between God and man, God's covenants are laws as well as covenants ; and so a man is, before he consents, obliged to consent. Therefore here again it appears gospel-doctrines are not to be exactly measured by human models. Nor should this be too earnestly endeavoured, we should not too much set our minds upon it ; it is to offer at a thing in its own nature not practicable, and there is too much of man in it.

6. When there is a discernable proneness to oppose the great things of the gospel to one another, and to exalt or magnify one, above or against another. It is too plain this may more com-

monly come under observation, than it doth under that reprehension which it deserves. For instance, those two great things that I mentioned at first, justification and sanctification, both very great things, of most apparent and confessed necessity to the salvation and blessedness of the souls of men; justification, that a man's state may be good; sanctification, that the temper of his soul may become so. But is it not too common to magnify one of these above or against the other? to contend and dispute with great fervour concerning the higher value and excellency, the dignity or precedency of this or that, and to which the preference belongs; to be so much taken up about the one, as seldom to think of the other; and it may be not well to savour and relish the mention of it? Some are so taken up about the business of justification, (that admirable vouchsafement of grace to sinners!) that they care not to hear of sanctification; and so all their religion is foreign to them, or lies in somewhat without them, or in a mere relative thing, that alters not their spirits. A strange religion! that makes a man nothing the better man: or notwithstanding which, he is in the habitual frame of his soul, as bad as ever, vain, terrene, worldly-minded, proud, passionate, wrathful, malicious, vindictive, false, deceitful, perhaps (for that is not worse than the rest) very impurely sensual. But, no man can tell why, nor to be sure he himself, he takes himself to be a justified person: and perhaps his imagination of it raises in him a sort of rapturous, unaccountable joy, without ground or root, and which will not only wither, but turn (without a seasonable and merciful change) into endless horror, weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth! A fearful and most surprising issue and disappointment of a high and unmisgiving confidence, and expectation to be saved! With others, whose temper, circumstances or temptations have less inclined them to rejoicing, their religion is made up of tormenting anxieties and fears, and consists in the daily revolving of perpetual endless doubts, whether they are justified or no; without any direct, formed design of being or doing good; by which they might in due time, come to have more truly comfortable apprehensions of the goodness of their state. They more care to be pardoned for being bad, than to become good!

Again, on the other hand, there may be some so wholly taken up about what they are in themselves to be and do, and in the earnest, but too abstract, or less evangelical (and therefore less fruitful) endeavour after higher pitches of sanctity, without due reference to the grace, Spirit, and blood of a Redeemer, that they neglect, and look not after their justification, and acceptance with God in him; nor do relish and savour as they ought, the doctrine of the gospel herein. Do more incline to a philo-

sophical (and scarcely christian) christianity; forgetting Christ to be their Redeemer, their Lord, and vital Head, and that they are (or ought to be) under his conduct, and through his mediation, daily tending to God and blessedness.

But now upon the whole, when there appears an aptness or disposition to separate these two, justification and sanctification from one another, or either of them from abiding in Christ, or to oppose them to one another, or contend about the priority of the one or the other (when no doubt they go together) and about the preference or excellency of the one above the other, which is the more considerable thing: herein appears much carnality of mind, an unsound, injudicious distempered spirit. And it is a like case, as if a malefactor at the same time is under sentence by which he is condemned to die, and under a most dangerous disease, that appears very probably mortal to him: he has a compassionate prince, willing to save his life, and he at once vouchsafes him his pardon, and provides a very skilful and able physician for the curing of his disease: the wretched creature hearing of this, falls a disputing which of these is the greatest favour, to have my disease cured, or, to have my crime pardoned; and in the heat of the dispute he neglects both, looks after neither. This is indeed less supposable, in the instanced case; but how great a distemper doth it shew, that it should be so, in this, which is of unexpressibly greater importance!

And now further it is agreed on all hands, that faith in a Redeemer is necessary to salvation, with those that are adult, and capable of attending to the gospel revelation; but here, What disputes are there raised? with what fervour are they managed, concerning the place of it, or the kind of that necessity which this faith is of, in order to the safe state of a sinner? A like case again, as if such a condemned malefactor is told of his prince's professed, gracious intendments towards him, but he doubts the sincerity of his professions. He gives him all desirable assurances, and tells him, Do but trust me, and all shall be well. But he presently falls a disputing, yea, But how am I to consider this trust? (we suppose it only such a trust as may be fitly enough placed upon a man) which way is it to contribute towards my safety or welfare? Is it to be an instrument or a condition? How absurd an abuse were this of the clemency of a propitious prince? If there were a public proclamation of pardon to many offenders at once concerned together, and they all agree only to disagree, to vie with one another their skill in criticizing upon the words, or in disputing the method, contending about the order and coherence of parts, and make it their business not thankfully to accept, but cavil at, to tear and mangle and pluck in pieces the proclamation, and defeat the kind

design and gracious tender of their prince? What clemency would not this provoke to the highest resentment and indignation? And what now can be stranger, or more perverse, than that a revelation from heaven of so much good-will to men, in the substance so plain, and that so directly concerns the salvation of souls, should be so torn and mangled? considered for no purpose less than that for which it was vouchsafed, and that the very end itself should be in so great part eluded, that was so kindly designed in it? though yet the endeavour of salving difficulties that occur, by earnest prayer, diligent study, and by amicable and placid collation among brethren, or comparing of sentiments, sincerely designed for a clearer understanding the frame of the gospel-truth, or how it may be with most advantage represented to men for the promoting of the common salvation, can be liable to no just reprehension, being managed with that reverence that so sacred things challenge, and with a due sense of our own ignorance and imperfection. That only which is blamable in this case, and whereof I reckon no account can be given, or defence made, is that when, for the substance, the gospel propounds and lays before us so plain a way wherein men are to endeavour the saving of their souls, as wherein the wayfaring man, though a fool, needs not err, that is, there must be repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a renewed heart, a holy life. One comes and pretends to shew that order of these things one way, so as to compose a scheme of them that is represented as most necessary to be observed and held to. No saith another, I will give you a righter scheme of salvation, another way, and mightily presses the necessity of that, and the dangerous mistakes of the other. And thus they cover a plain way with thorns and briars, do not instruct, but perplex and distract whom they should direct, create distinctions and oppositions of scheme to scheme, not only without necessity, but almost without a difference, and yet insist with vehemency, and lay men's salvation upon their understanding the matter so or so, when it is hoped thousands have been saved, that never heard of the one scheme or the other, as they are distinguished and opposed to each other. Who can justify this? Again in the

7. Place: When any do with great zeal contend for this or that opinion or notion, as very sacred and highly spiritual, (as they account) with no other design, than that under that pretence they may indulge their own carnal inclination with the greater liberty. It was the very genius of this sort of men against whom this epistle was meant, whether they were then called gnostics it matters not. The name well agreed to them and they were known by it afterwards. They were men of much

pretence to knowledge and sublime notions, as they counted them. And herein lay their religion; and under this pretence they indulged themselves in all manner of licentiousness. When any do take up with mere notions, which they are zealous for, accounting them very highly spiritual; and under pretext of these, they indulge the carnality of their hearts, if not of their lives and practices too: and their fine notion, (as they account it) which they (more uncertainly) father upon the Spirit of truth must be substituted in the room of all that love, meekness, humility, heavenliness, self-denial, which are the most certain and undoubted fruits of this blessed Spirit: when under the pretence of being notional men, and of knowing a great deal more than most others do, any neglect their own spirits, and suffer pride, avarice, ambition, vindictiveness and falsehood, to shelter themselves under the thin cobweb of a few fine spun notions; and they can now hereupon live at random, with more ease to their own minds, and they think, with better reputation as to other men.

Here is a glittering shew only of an airy, imagined, pretended spirituality, drawn over (but which doth not hide) corrupt, rotten, putrid flesh. Have you never known such a case, when it might be said there goes a proud, ambitious man, a covetous man, a false man, a malicious man; but he is a man of rare and singular notions, knows a great deal more than most others do; and this must atone for all his crimes with God and man, and both quiet his conscience, and salve his credit together! And who can doubt but this man must be very fond of his own opinions, and zealously contend and dispute for them upon any occasion (though he never so ineptly make it) when they are to do him so great service, and to stand him in so much stead, that is to supply the room for him of all real religion and morality. And if he have happened upon such notions as are really true, and revealed by God himself, by how much the more certainly divine they be, so much the greater is the wickedness, so basely to prostitute sacred things, truths that are the very offspring of heaven, unto so vile purposes. It were fault enough to make them serve different or other purposes than they are capable of, that is, to supply the room of religion and real goodness. What an indignity is that to religion, to suppose an empty spiritless opinion can fill up its place! A thing that does a man no good, for which his mind and spirit is nothing the better! much more, that shelters what is so very bad? Can this serve for religion? That religion that consists with being proud, with being deceitful, with being malicious, with being revengeful! Learn to despise such a religion! Much

more that is taken up to veil over these, and exclude all real goodness ! Again,

8. When, in the maintaining any doctrine of the gospel in opposition to others, we industriously set ourselves to pervert their meaning, and impute things to them that they never say. Or again if we charge their opinions whom we oppose with consequences which they disclaim, professing, it may be, rather to disclaim their former opinion, and change their judgment, than admit such consequences, if they could discern any connection between the one and the other. This surely argues a mighty disposition to contend, when we will quarrel with one that is really of our own mind ; for herein he appears to be virtually already in the same mind in a greater matter, at least, than he differs with us about ; because no man charges another's opinion with a consequence, designing thereby to oblige him to change his opinion ; but as supposing it to be an agreed thing between them both, that the consequence is worse than the opinion. When therefore the consequence I charge is disclaimed by him whom I oppose, either it is justly charged, or it is not. If it be not, his opinion may be true, notwithstanding what I herein say to the contrary, and I am certainly so far in an error. But if it be justly charged, being yet disclaimed, we are formally agreed concerning the consequence, and are virtually agreed concerning the disputed point too, because he professedly disavows it upon supposition such a consequence would follow, which yet perhaps he sees not ; and so the agreement must be much greater than the difference. And yet commonly this signifies nothing in order to peace : that is, it is not enough, that I see the same things that you do, unless I also see them too with your eyes.

9. When such disputes do arise at length to wrath, to angry strife, yea, and even to fixed enmity. What dreadful carnality is here ! Most deservedly so called, if you only consider flesh or carnality as an unreasonable, a brutal thing. For what can be more unreasonable or unaccountable than to fall out with another man, because he thinks not as I do, or receives not my sentiments, as I also do not receive his. Is it not to be considered, that he no further differs from me than I do from him ? If there be cause of anger, upon this account, on one side, there is the same cause on the other too ; and then whether shall this grow ? And how little can this avail upon a rational estimate ? Can any good come of it ? doth it tend to the clearing of truth ? Shall we see the better through the clouds and dust we raised ? Is a good cause served by it ? or do we think it possible the wrath of man should ever work the righteousness of God ? And when such carnalities as these do exert themselves, and the hot steams and fumes arise, which the apostle

here calls the lusts of the flesh, the flesh lusting to envy, lusting to wrath: what is the product (or even the productive cause) but that of fire which is without light? And you know what fire that resembles! And if a man once find any fervour of this kind stir, or kindle in his breast, if he aright consider, he would no more cherish it, than one would do a brand thrown into his bosom from the infernal fire. One would think in this case, What have I stirring within me? something a-kin to hell! Can this conduce to the service of divine and heavenly truth? And let it be sadly considered; our being, upon such accounts angry with one another, is a dismal token of God's being angry with us all, and a provoking cause of it too. Methinks that should be a qualmy thought! and strike our souls with a strange damp! Shall I indulge that in myself, that is a mark upon me of divine displeasure; and upon all in whom it is found? To have this Holy Spirit retire, that blessed Spirit of love, and of a sound mind, and to leave us under the power of rebellious lusting flesh! Can this be grateful, or not be a dismaying, frightful thing? And whereas a right scheme of gospel-doctrine is the thing pretended to be striven for, I beseech you consider: The more entirely, and the more deeply, the true scheme of gospel-doctrine is inlaid in a man's soul, the more certainly it must form it all into meekness, humility, gentleness, love, kindness and benignity towards fellow-christians of whatsoever denomination; not confined, not limited, (as that of the pharisees) unto their own party; but diffusing and spreading itself to all that bear the character and cognizance of Christ. The Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is a Spirit of greater amplitude; extends and diffuses itself through the whole body of Christ.

Nor can any man more effectually disgrace his own cause, or make sure to worst himself in it, than by defending it wrathfully. For admit that he err whom I oppose, a thousand to one but that my wrath is worse than his errors probably a thousand times worse. I go about therefore to take away a mote from his eye, having a beam in my own; or am more concerned for a misplaced hair upon his head, than I am for a fiery ulcer in my own breast. We are not, it is true, to be so stoical to condemn the natural passion of anger, as such for sinful. But if it exceeds its cause, and sets not with the sun, it becomes strange, unhallowed fire. But again in the

10. Place: There is still a further appearance of great carnality in such cases, when any do adventure to judge of the consciences and states of them whom they oppose, or from whom they differ: when they ascend the tribunal, usurp the throne, pass sentence upon them, as men of no conscience, or of no sincerity, or uprightness of heart with God. As if theirs were to

be the universal conscience, the measure of all consciences; and he that cannot be governed by their conscience must have none at all: or he be stark blind towards truth, towards God, and towards himself, that sees not every thing they see, or fancy themselves to see.

This is a most high usurpation upon divine prerogative; and how can any insensibly slide into such an evil as this, in the face of so plain and so awful a text of Scripture, that so severely animadverts upon it? that 14th. to the Romans, in sundry verses of it. With what reverence and dread should it strike a man's soul in such a case! When we have the rights of the Redeemer asserted in those whom he hath bought with his blood? And are told that for this end Christ both died and rose, and revived that he might be Lord both of the dead and living, ver. 9. And it is thereupon further said to us, Who art thou that judgest another's servant, as ver. 10. Why dost thou judge thy brother, or set at nought thy brother? We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. We are all of us his, he both died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of all, as Acts 10. 36. And here of dead and living, that is, that he might be owner of all, which is the first notion of *Dominus* or *Lord*, and in both worlds, the visible and the invisible, that into which many are dead, and deceased from hence, and so to us become invisible; and many that, yet surviving, are still visible to us. So ample is his dominion! And because the *jus imperii*, the right of government, of which judgment is the last, conclusive act, hath for its foundation the *jus domini*, right of dominion; it is therefore asserted to him as the *coronis* and complement, the very summity of his acquired rights, that he is to finish all things by the last judgment, which must pass upon both the already dead, and the yet living. Thus is ground of the expostulation laid. Who art thou who presumest to juggle him out of this his supreme and most sacred right? Perhaps the matter disputed about may be doubtful, but there is no doubt concerning this incommunicable authority of our Lord Christ, or concerning his law against such judging. Matt. 7. 1. And to run into certain sin, in a furious chasing of uncertain error! What consideration, what tenderness of offending, of affronting him, and of hazarding our own souls is there in all this?

To judge other men's consciences, is of so near affinity with governing them, that they that can allow themselves to do the former, want only power, not will or inclination, to offer at the other too. Which puts the matter out of doubt, that when men of this temper complain of such usurpation, it is not that they think it an offence in itself, but against them only; and that no

consciences ought to be free, but their own. The proof of an honest and equal mind herein is, when we judge this to be evil not being hurt by it; or abhor to hurt others in this kind, when we have power to do it. Upon which account that passage is memorable of the emperor Maximilian II. to a certain prelate, that there was no sin, no tyranny more grievous than to affect dominion over men's consciences; and that they who do so, go about to invade the tower of heaven. A considerable saying from so great a prince, that lived and died in the roman communion. What shall be thought of any such protestants, that without any colour or shadow of a ground, besides differing from them in some very disputable and unimportant opinions, shall presume to judge of other men's consciences, (and consequently of their states God-ward) which such a one as he thought it so presumptuous wickedness to attempt to over-rule or govern?

11. When we over-magnify our own understandings, and assume too much to ourselves. That is, do expect that our minds be taken for standards to all minds: as if *we*, of all mankind, were exempt from error, or the possibility of being mistaken. A certain sort of φιλαυλία or αυδοσαδεια, an excess of love and admiration of ourselves, or over-pleasedness with ourselves, too much self complacency, is the true (though very deep and most hidden) root of our common mischief in such cases. We wrap up ourselves within ourselves, and then we are all the world. Do only compare ourselves with ourselves, never letting it enter into our minds, that others have their sentiments too, perhaps wiser than ours; but abound in our own sense; and while (as the apostle in that case says) we are not wise, and perhaps are the only persons that think ourselves so, we yet take upon us, as if we were fit to dictate to the world, to all christians, and to all mankind; or as if we only were the men, and wisdom must die with us.

This is a sort of evil, than which there is none more common and none less observed; none wherewith the guilty are so little apt to charge themselves, or admit conviction of it. For, I pray, do but consider; all the several differing parties amongst us do with one voice pretend to be for peace; but how, and upon what terms? Why, that all the rest are presently to be of their mind; and that is all the peace that most are for. For where (scarce any where) is the man to be found? Or how great a rarity is he, that entertains the thought "That there may, for ought I know, be much to be redressed and corrected in my apprehensions of things, to make me capable of falling in with that truth which ought to be common to all." There is an expectation with many, of a good time and state of things, be-

fore this world end, when all shall be of one mind and judgment : but the most think it must be by all men's becoming of their mind and judgment. And of this self-conceit it is usually a harder thing to fasten conviction upon men, than of most other evils. We have more hope in speaking against drunkenness, murder, or any the grossest kind of wickedness : for there the conscience of the guilty falls in, and takes part with the reprover. But we can more easily, and more frequently do, (though not frequently enough) observe the faults of the inferior faculties or of our external actions, than of the faculty itself which should observe. Our mind, which is naturally like our eye, is, in this, too like, that is, that it can see every thing but itself. It doth not, by using it, preserve its peculiar, self-reflecting power ; is blind towards itself, beyond what naturally belongs to it. An object may be too near our bodily eye to be seen. Our mind is herein too bodily, too much carnalized, sunk too deep into flesh. It is the next thing to itself ; and here, not by its primitive nature, (by which as an intellectual sun it could revert its beams, and turn them inward upon itself) but by depravation, it for the most part sees nothing ; or doth worse, thinks itself to see what is not to be seen, certain imaginary excellencies, which make the man his own idol ; an object of a sort of adoration to himself ; and of scorn and derision (most probably) to every one else. In this case every man is, however, most commonly innocent in his own eyes, or still thinks he is in the right : amidst the so vast a variety of apprehensions and sentiments no one suspects himself to be in the wrong. All are for the truth, and they are all for peace and union. By which some indeed, more gently, mean, they hope all will quit their former mistaken opinions and ways (as in great kindness to themselves they take for granted all men's are but their own) and come wholly over to them. Others that have not breasts capable of even so much charity as this, not only are as much lovers and admirers of themselves, but so vehement haters of all that presume to differ from them, that they think them not fit to live in the world that durst not adventure to do so. The meaning therefore of their being for peace, is, that they would have all destroyed that are not of their minds : and then (as the roman historian speaks) *Quando solitudinem fecere appellant pacem* : when they have made a desolation, so that they themselves are left alone in the world, that, they will call peace.

But you will say, What is to be done ? or what would I persuade in this case of differing apprehensions and ways still remaining among christians ? I answer, Not presently to unbelieve all that ever a man hath believed before ; or to abandon on the sudden his former sentiments, or to find fault with himself for

having thought them right. For it is a contradiction to be of any opinion, and not then to think it right. Nor, therefore, is it scepticism, by any means, that I would advise to; as if there were nothing to be thought certain, but this: that whereas the greatest and most necessary things in religion are most plain, that is, either most plain in themselves, or most expressly revealed in the word of God. Here let us be stedfast ourselves, without being severe towards other men. Other things, that are more matter of doubt and dispute, by how much the less plain they are, we should count so much the less necessary. In reference therefore to these less momentous things, about which there is with us most of jangling, there ought always to be great modesty, and distrust of our own understandings, and a continued readiness to receive information, with constant looking up to the Father of lights for further illumination, and a resolution, wherein we, with others, have attained, to walk by the same rule, minding the same (agreed) things, hoping God will reveal his mind to the otherwise minded in his own time, as the apostle in Phil. 3 16, 17. But to hasten to a close, I further add in the

Last place, Such carnality greatly shews itself in an affectation and desire of having such disputes still kept a foot, and the contents continued without either limit or rational design. This shews a deep tincture, and is a plain indication of a mind to a very great degree carnalized, when a mighty pleasure is taken to see the saw drawn, and the ball kept up. And if the question be asked, Pray how long? So little of reasonable answer can be given, that it might as well be said in plain terms, Till all words be spent, till speech or language fail, till Elias come, or doomsday come. So that if there were never so much reason to commend the having said somewhat in defence of this or that disputed point, we might yet say as Seneca did of Cicero's so much overpraising his own consulship, "I blame him not for praising it without cause, but for doing it without end;" or that he could never give over, or tell when he had said enough. Upon the same terms upon which it is now so much desired such disputes should be continued, when what is truly enough is already said, they might as well wish they alway should. Which signifies that when we say, we would have men contend for truth, we wish it not so much for truth's sake, as for the contention's sake. By all means, say they, strive for the truth: not that they care so much for truth, as for the strife. For in some circumstances there is not an end in view, that is rationally to be designed or served by it on this side the end of all things. Nor consequently any good principle that is to be exercised or gratified thereby. What is needful to be said in the

matters already referred to, for the informing and satisfying of tractable minds, sincerely willing to understand the truth, lies within a little compass. And when, in controversy that is once said which truly belongs to the very point in question, the rest is commonly trifling and reflexion, or the perplexing of the matter more, and darkening counsel by words without knowledge. If love to truth be alleged for the principle that prompts men to covet so continual altercations about it, I would say this shews more want of love to it. For hereby they are diverted from that which renders it most of all amiable, and for which it ought chiefly to be loved. As it is the truth according to godliness, and by which we are to be sanctified, and begotten more and more (as of an immortal seed) into the divine likeness. Experience shews how little, disputes better men's spirits. If we love divine truth, why do we not feed and live upon it, and enjoy its pleasant relishes? but relish gravel more, or chaff and bran? For thither the agitation of continued controversies about it doth soon sift it, the grain of flour (the kidney of the wheat) being passed away, and gone from us. Can none remember when the disputative humour had even eaten out the power and spirit of practical religion and godliness? Thither things are again tending, if either by severity or mercy, (one may say rather than not otherwise, by merciful severity) God do not prevent and repress that tendency. As yet I fear the humour is violent, when the fervour of men's spirits is such, as to carry them over all Scripture-directions, and animadversions, that they signify nothing with them: only make it their business each one to animate the more vogue'd champions of their own party into the highest ferments, and cry, Dispute, dispute, write, write; preach, preach one against another; let not the business go over so, do not keep silence. Thus are many, as the apostle speaks, puffed up for one against another, 1 Cor. 4. 6. And what, has such a text of Scripture as that no edge? no point? by which to lance, to pierce such a tumour? No, when the humour is once up, and has inwrought men's hearts; is settled there, and hath obdured them to a brawny hardness; such texts of Scripture, though so mighty pat and apposite, are esteemed by them but as leviathan esteems spears and swords, like straw and rotten wood, they do not enter into men's hearts. A strange kind of obduration!

And how supposable is it, that they who are so puffed up for others, may also, through the known corruption of nature even in the best, do herein not a little to the puffing up of them too. The apostle's concluding of this chapter with those cautions, Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another, immediately upon his renewing of the

precept, (ver. 25.) of walking in the Spirit : and immediately before those words, (chap. 6. 1.) If a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, shews how he understood the case to be with these Galatian christians, that as to doctrinals were yet sound and unfallen : that there was yet such carnality working in their continued contests, (though for the truth) such pride, such affectation of vain-glory, such wrathfulness, as shewed it was not mere love to truth that kept up the contest, but some such worse principles. Nothing is plainer than that principles and ends measure one another. And when that is done, or coveted to be done, that serves no good end; or is so done, as not to serve but destroy, or hinder any end that is truly good; the principle must be very bad, that moves the wheel. Disorderly eccentric motions betray their principle and end together. When the carriage and conduct of an affair that carries with it the appearance of serving the truth, is impetuous, eager, precipitant; when there is no good end in view of the present so modified endeavour; when enough is agreed already to serve the most important ends, unity among brethren, the salvation of souls, and yet things are further insisted on, unnecessary to either, yea, prejudicial to both, and upon which the weight and stress of either of these cannot be laid without sin; it too plainly appears vain-glory to oneself, or the slurring of a (designed) adversary is the end; and then the principle is proportionable. Yet even in the light, and when matters are thus open and in view, oppositions are pushed on, and men's spirits rise to that pitch, as to bear down whatever is proposed, only with design to make their career a little slower: yea, and they are apt, rather than hearken, to put opprobrious names and characters upon them that are not altogether so furious as themselves.

Nor have they themselves the patience to consider consequences, and whether these things tend; that is, that God is provoked, that the souls of men are endangered, greatly endangered. I have found in my own conversation, that some even in distress, in agonies, have said, "Lord, be merciful to us, I know not which way to go; one preaches one thing, another preaches the quite contrary." I know they mistake; we do generally in substance preach the same gospel. Thanks be to God his gospel is not confined to a few men, or to this or that party of men. But in the mean time, it is a thing of very ill consequence to lay stumbling-blocks before the blind, bars and obstructions in the way of the weak and the lame, whereby they may be turned out of the way, who should rather be strengthened.

It is not considered, that where the danger is less of an utter ruin to the souls of men, there is however occasioned a great languor and enfeeblement. They should be considered, and treated, not only as being weak, but lest they should be made so. When they are diverted from the proper means of improvement and growth, and their minds are alienated from those means being otherwise engaged, an ill habit is contracted; and when the distemper hath seized some, it spreads, and soon infects more. Nutriment is dispensed, from the head through the body, by the co-operation of the several parts, as those texts, Eph. 4. 16. Col. 2. 19. do with great emphasis and elegance speak. Understand it so, that how far soever there is, or ought to be actual communion, every limb and joint contributes something to the strength and vigour of the rest. So is nourishment ministered, and spreads itself in the body to its edifying itself in love: which love if it fail, a universal languor cannot but ensue, the free circulation of vital spirits being obstructed and stopped. And those that are most sensible, if they be not so much otherwise damnified, cannot, when they observe it, but be grieved, and take it bitterly to heart; when the tokens appear to their view of a general decay. The living members of any body are pained, when the body is wasted and rent; dead or stupified and benumbed members feel it not, are unapprehensive. But above all, it ought to be considered, (but how little is it?) that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and doth (as we may fear it will more) sensibly retire: the gospel in which it is wont to breathe is trifled with: the glorious gospel, the gospel of the grace of God, (can men find nothing else to play with) by which that blessed Spirit hath begotten many a soul to God, and nourished them unto life eternal. That precious thing designed for so great, and sacred purposes, (as pampered, wanton children do with their food) they dally with, or quarrel about it, or squander and throw it away. How can this but offend? The self-procured distempers which did precede, and those that ensue, increase the offence. When it is said, Eph. 4. 30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God—and presently subjoined, ver. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away; Is it not left to us to collect, that these things do more peculiarly grieve the Spirit? that Spirit of grace, of all love, goodness, sweetness and benignity. There is but one body, and one Spirit, a Spirit that spreads vital influence in the body. What can you think of that Spirit that feels every where? that is in the body a universal sentient? How can that Spirit but be grieved! Passion it is not capable of, but just and sedate displeacency, that matters should be so. How should any of us

like it, to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part! Though with him real commotion, and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we can either feel or conceive.

But where this angry, tumified, proud flesh is the governing thing, none of these tremendous consequences or considerations, while it is so, take any place. The litigious quarrelsome genius will throw off all, will find no leisure or room for a calm thought: but though the course in which we are engaged should be ready to set on fire the whole course of nature, will be still for casting abroad firebrands, and arrows, and death; and make us think this fine sport! If indeed there were room for any cooler thoughts, one would think such as these should not lie remote. How little any of us know, or are capable of knowing in this our present state! that they that think they know most, or are most conceited of their own knowledge, know nothing as they ought to know; that they that are most apt to contend, do most of all fight in the dark; that it is too possible there may be much knowledge without love; how little such knowledge is worth! that it profits nothing; that it hurts, puffs up, when love edifies; that the devils know more than any of us, while their want of love, or their hellish malignity makes them devils; that as by pride comes contention, so humility would contribute more to peace, (and to the discerning of truth too) than the most fervent disceptation; that there is no hope of proselyting the world to my opinion or way; that if I cannot be quiet till I have made such and such of my mind, I shall still be unquiet while others are not of it, that is, always: that if some one's judgment must be a standard to the world, there are thousands fitter for it than mine; that they that in their angry contests think to shame their adversary, do commonly most of all shame themselves.

But to close all, I pray let us consider, we are, professedly, going to heaven, that region of light, and life, and purity, and love. It well indeed becomes them that are upon the way thither, modestly to inquire after truth. Humble, serious, diligent endeavours to increase in divine knowledge, are very suitable to our present state of darkness and imperfection. The product of such inquiries we shall carry to heaven with us, with whatsoever is most akin thereto, (besides their usefulness in the way thither.) We shall carry truth, and the knowledge of God to heaven with us; we shall carry purity thither, devotedness of soul to God and our Redeemer, divine love and joy, if we have their beginnings here, with whatsoever else of real permanent excellency, that hath a settled, fixed seat and place

in our souls now ; and shall there have them in perfection. But do we think we shall carry strife to heaven? Shall we carry anger to heaven? envyings, heart-burnings, animosities, enmities, hatred of our brethren and fellow-christians, shall we carry these to heaven with us?

Let us labour to divest ourselves, and strike off from our spirits, every thing that shall not go with us to heaven, or is equally unsuitable to our end and way, that there may be nothing to obstruct and hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom.
